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In Memoriam.

THE LATE

REVEREND THOMAS JOHNSON,

OF

BRISTOL, PONTIAC COUNTY, PROVINCE OF QUEBEC,

Diocese of Montreal.

*Instantly called to his eternal rest, by being thrown from
his carriage, while on his way to an afternoon service
at Thorne, on Sabbath, 17th August, 1873.*

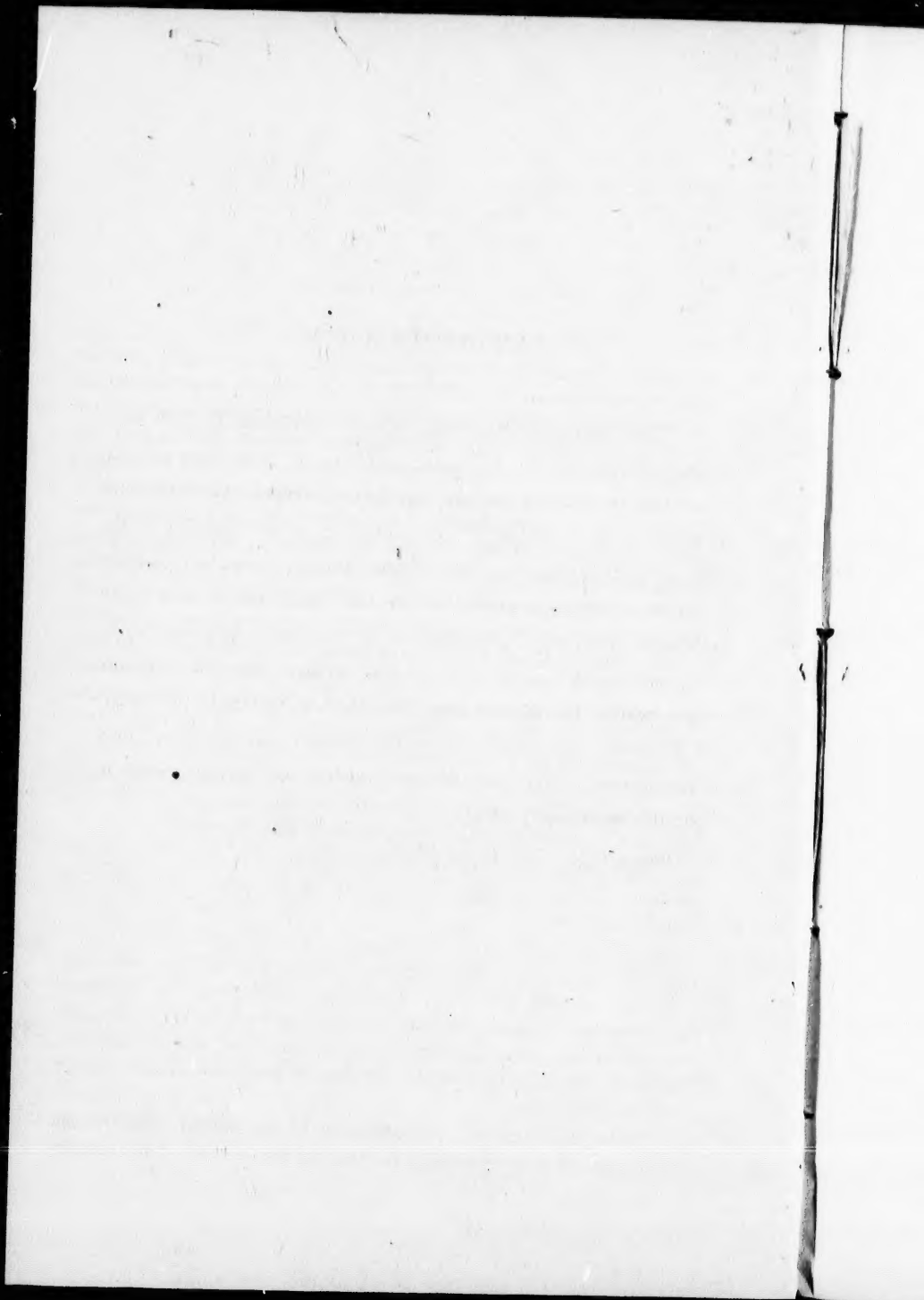
OTTAWA:

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF A. S. WOODBURN, ELGIN STREET.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following Memorial, kindly furnished by the most intimate friend and father in the ministry of their dear son—in connection with the singularly appropriate sermon, the manuscript of which he had evidently been studying as he travelled in the discharge of his duty to his Divine Master, when so suddenly called to “exchange mortality for life,” and which was found beside his body, slightly stained with his blood—is presented to his parishioners and friends by his bereaved parents, with the prayer and in the earnest hope, that the lessons taught so clearly, and Providentially inculcated by the painful circumstances, may be the means, under the Divine blessing, of leading many to thoughtfulness and prayer.

Ottawa City, 27th August, 1873.



OBITUARY.

"What I say unto you I say unto all—WATCH."

THESE words of our blessed Lord are presented with peculiar force to our minds in connection with the solemn warning we all have received in the sudden and most unexpected death of our dear departed brother, the Rev. THOMAS JOHNSON, Minister of the Church of England in Bristol, on the Ottawa. He had exchanged services for the day (the 17th of August) with a neighbouring clergyman, and in the fulfilment of his duty he had to perform Divine Service in two townships, Leslie and Thorne. While proceeding from the former to the latter place to hold his second service, his horse ran away, throwing him out of the little spring cart in which he was driving, and, falling with fearful violence upon a projecting stone in the road, his skull was fractured, and his death was instantaneous. At the moment of his death, he was reading the last page of the sermon which he was on the eve of preaching to the congregation in Thorne. It was on the subject of death, and the importance of being prepared for that solemn event; and from the concluding words of his manuscript it is evident that he purposed closing the discourse with a solemn exhortation to his hearers to seek and secure Divine Grace, to fit them for death and judgment.

The deceased, whose career of usefulness has thus so early and suddenly closed on earth, was a man of far more than ordinary intellectual power.

Gentle and retiring in his manners, humble and diffident as to his own capabilities, those only who knew him well, or who happened to be with him when circumstances required him to throw off his usual diffidence, became aware of the varied information, the logical power, the quickness of conception, with which he would illustrate the subject in hand, and this in language always chaste and forcible.

From the time of his ordination to the sacred office of the ministry, and more especially for the last few months of his earthly

career, Mr. JOHNSON was deeply, and even painfully impressed with a sense of the awful responsibility of his sacred office. The portion of the mission field in which he laboured, required at his hands many sacrifices, and much hard work, and when the writer of these few memorial lines reminded him that the Bishop spoke of appointing him to a more inviting field, and when he was urged to address the Bishop on the subject, the answer he gave was to the effect that he did not wish to write or mention the subject at all to his Bishop, that he felt the responsibility of his work so keenly that he shrunk from doing or saying anything to influence the mind of the Bishop in favor of his removal. That he wished to go wherever he was sent, and labour wherever he was appointed, and that he could thus more clearly recognize the directing hand of God's Providence in his work. That if his work was harder, and his discouragements greater than they were, he was quite prepared to labour on so long as he was appointed to that sphere of labour. He said, moreover, that the welfare of the souls of those among whom his work was being done, was daily becoming more and more his desire.

The last time he visited the writer of these few lines of affectionate remembrance, the subject of conversation turned upon death and the nature and condition of the spirit of man when separated from its earthly tabernacle; its probable surprise in realizing the perfection of its own identity; its complete possession of its faculties of memory, will, judgment, affections, powers of perception, and holding intercourse with other intelligent beings around it; its remembrances of friends on earth, as well as its recognition of those in paradise.

Little did the writer think that in a few days the dear friend whom he was then conversing ~~on~~ on those delightful topics would know so well from actual experience how far our conclusions were in accordance with the facts.

Now he is gone—the young, the wise, and the useful minister of Christ. May his unexpected departure speak to us the importance of “working while it is day,” remembering that “the night cometh when no man can work.”

His funeral was a solemn sight. Six clergymen in white surplices were the pall bearers, and six more also in their white robes preceded the coffin from his father's residence on Daly street to St. Alban's Church. There the solemn and beautiful burial service of the Church was offered. Twelve clergymen in their altar robes

occupied their places in the Chancel, and united with the choir and congregation in the appropriate Chants and Hymns. Among the latter was the favourite Hymn of the deceased :

" O Paradise, O Paradise
Who doth not crave for rest ?
Who would not seek the happy land
Where they that loved are blest ?
Where loyal hearts and true
Stand ever in the light
All rapture through and through,
In God's most holy sight.

O Paradise, O Paradise,
'Tis weary waiting here ;
I long to be where Jesus is,
To feel to see Him near ;
Where loyal hearts and true
Stand ever in the light
All rapture through and through,
In God's most holy sight.

O Paradise, O Paradise
I greatly long to see
The special place my dearest Lord
In love prepares for me ;
Where loyal hearts and true
Stand ever in the light
All rapture through and through,
In God's most holy sight.

Lord Jesus, King of Paradise ;
O keep me in thy love
And guide me to that happy land
Of perfect rest above ;
Where loyal hearts and true
Stand ever in the light
All rapture through and through,
In God's most holy sight."

To his sorrowing family, and indeed, to all his friends, it is a source of great comfort to know that he met his death in the discharge of his sacred duty to his Divine Lord and Master.

Happy is it that his dear parents, whom he loved so much, and whose hearts clung to him with such intense affection, and looked forward to his future usefulness with such fond hope, know so well to whom they can go for comfort. Thank God they are enabled in

this dark hour of trial, to say in the spirit of true resignation and Christian faith, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

O may we all be found at our post of duty, working, watching, looking for the Lord when the summons comes to us. May it be our happy lot to join our dear departed friend at last in the kingdom of our Lord, where death can never come, and sorrow and sighing flee away forever. Where in the enjoyment of the Divine presence, in the associations of the blessed inhabitants of heaven, and in the eternal advancement in knowledge and happiness, we shall learn to prize more, and be more and more grateful for the infinite love of God, who in his mercy rescued us from the ruins of sin, and bestowed upon us this eternal felicity through the atonement of his own dear Son.

JOHN JOHNSTON,
Minister St. James' Church, Hull.

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SERMON.

I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe.—JOHN xi, 15.

To most men death is a theme of sadness, if not of terror. We shrink from it, and yet how constantly and vividly is it kept in our view. Every day we are reminded that we are mortal. "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness of it, as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth," even so must everything earthly. All that is brightest and fairest must wither and fade and die. We walk through the valley of the shadow of death; that dark figure stands at the head of the way before us, and we walk ever in the gloomy shadow which it casts. It is natural that the thought of death should be one of gloom and even fear. We know that its coming is certain, but the day or the hour of its coming no man can tell. It sets at nought all human calculations and probabilities. It is indiscriminate in its ravages, it takes the young as well as the old, the good as well as the bad; it spares not for human terror and sorrow, but tears away the stay of the feeble, the hope of nations, the good, the brave, the promising. And then it is a mystery; the grave is clothed with darkness; it is a change so sudden, so great, so incomprehensible. No wonder that those who live by sight and not by faith, should shrink from the contemplation of such a theme.

The narrative from which our text is taken, presents the subject of death before us, but not as associated with gloom. Its brighter aspects are shown; we are pointed to the lights in the picture as well as the shades; death is shorn of its terrors, and light gleams through the darkness of the tomb. It is a most affecting story, one that comes home to our own hearts. It is an oft-told story of human love and grief, of loss and desolation, and of Divine tenderness and care. It is full of instruction. Let us attempt to gather some of its lessons for our comfort and help, and the increase of our faith.

The first words of our Saviour in the text, are remarkable. "I am glad." At this time Mary and Martha, dear friends of Jesus, were crushed with grief, and yet, concerning the cause of their sorrow He said, "I am glad." This utterance must have sounded very strange to the disciples, for as yet they only knew Christ after the flesh; at least they had but a dim comprehension of the spiritual truths upon which his action was based. His character was still something of a riddle to their minds. Hence this expression was to them a mystery. We are learners in the school of life—we know the system of truth revealed in God's word—we believe in Christ—we feel ourselves to be under the rule and care of God—we recognize the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, but there is much in the Providence of God that is dark to us. Sin has weakened our spiritual eyesight, and our perceptions are clouded and dim.

The Christian, as he advances in his religious life, feels more and more his own inherent feebleness and ignorance, the imperfection and meagreness of his views, and feels more and more the absolute need of Divine enlightenment and counsel. The disciples could not understand the motives of Christ in allowing, when he might have prevented, the death of his friend, with all its consequences of sorrow to those who were left behind. This case is not a singular one. There are few in whose experience it has not been repeated. "God's ways are not as our ways." Many of His dealings with us are beyond human understanding. There are times when to the unaided human mind, it must seem as if God had withdrawn himself from His creatures, and left them to suffer unheeded and uncared for—that he was deaf to the cry of human agony. Why does God thus hide himself, as it were, and allow His creatures to suffer? If, with the disciples, we have thus questioned within our hearts, we shall find in the text the solution of the problem. In it are unfolded the purposes of God, and the principles of His government of men.

And 1st. Our Lord was glad for the sake of his disciples.

To have saved the life of Lazarus would have been more consistent with the views and wishes of his disciples. It would have been *apparently* more consistent with his regard for his friends. It would have saved them present pain. But his desire for his followers extended beyond their present happiness. His views and his actions had reference to their highest welfare. He had regard to their spiritual improvement—to their eternal well being. There was a lesson in this calamity which they must learn, even at the

expense of pain to those who were so dearly beloved. The whole life of our blessed Saviour was a carrying out of this principle. All that He did and suffered was for the sake of His Church. Did he leave the Throne of Majesty in Heaven—did he empty Himself of glory, and take upon Himself the deepest humiliation and abasement? "For our sakes He became poor." Did He here endure sorrows and pain, more deep, more intense than the human mind can conceive? "He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows." Did He take upon himself the burden of a world's sin, and sanctify Himself for the work of a Mediator? For our sakes he did it, and that *we* might be sanctified by the truth. A voice from heaven comforted Him, and He said, "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. After having suffered he left the world, because "it was expedient for us that the Comforter might come to us." And He now sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high, that *we* may have "an Advocate with the Father." Upon the same law proceeded his dealings with us, his children. It is the law of love, which regards not so much the present happiness as the future blessedness of its object. Whatever befalls us then, whatever sorrows reach us, however dark may seem the ways of God with us, we know that it is for our sake, for our own good, that it is from Him who loves us with an infinite love, who for our sake spared not Himself, but freely gave Himself for us all.

Again. Our Lord was glad that he was not there—that is, to heal the sick. To have brought deliverance to that sorrowing family would have been a blessing—to withhold it was a greater blessing. By His presence, what comfort and joy would he have given to those hearts, now well nigh breaking with their agony of suspense and dread. They had sent to him, "Lord he whom thou lovest is sick." He knew how they longed for him; his heart was with them. He saw the trouble that was falling upon them. He saw the dread shadow of death as it grew deeper and blacker, as it settled down upon them, throwing its gloom upon all their pleasant things, until it shut out all light and joy from their homes, and yet he stayed away. Did they wonder at his absence, at his seeming indifference? Did they think that he had forsaken them? They were to learn that in this was a higher exercise of his love towards them than if he had responded to their prayer. In this, infinite love and wisdom were united to secure for them a blessing beyond what they could conceive. Doubtless many of us have known the bitterness of bereavement.

Unexpectedly in the midst of the business and enjoyment of life, sorrow has come upon us. As in southern lands, a cloudless sky is suddenly overcast, and the tempest comes down in might and terror, in our serenest hour the clouds have gathered, and the sudden storm has broken, crushing us with its overwhelming power and leaving us shattered and desolate. We shrank and cried out for succor as we saw the blow coming upon us; we refused to believe that relief would not come, and when the worst came we thought our grief greater than we could bear. Perhaps we murmured, feeling that God had dealt too heavily with us. Or we have seen the strange mysterious dealings of God with our neighbors. But far be it from us to judge the dispensations of God. We must wait. When the great plan of the Almighty is worked out—when His mighty purpose are accomplished, we shall see the end towards which these things are working. "God is unsearchable; His ways past finding out," but of one thing we may be sure, that all His plans are laid in wisdom and carried out in love—that if he cause sorrow, it is that we may partake more abundantly of His mercy. His wisdom is infinite, He cannot err; His love is infinite, He cannot be unkind.

"I am glad for your sake that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe."

Here the Lord explains the purpose for which he had allowed this affliction to befall His friends at Bethany. It was for the increase of the disciples' faith. This was the benefit that was to flow out of and counterbalance all that sorrow. Now the disciples had already believed, but their faith was weak. Christ designed its increase. They were but beginners in the knowledge of God—they were slow to learn—they needed "line upon line, precept upon precept." Christ was leading them along, step by step, to a higher knowledge, to clearer views of truth, to higher conceptions of Himself, to deeper acquaintance with the things of God, to higher and purer experience. He was training them for the mighty work which they had to do, and to this end it was necessary that their faith should be confirmed and strengthened; for upon their faith depended their spiritual life, their power, their usefulness. And this is God's purpose in his dealing with us—"to the intent ye may believe." Faith is the foundation, the beginning and the end of Christian life. By faith we are justified—by faith we are sanctified—by faith we are furnished unto good works. Faith then is the supreme good. To believe is to achieve the chief end of existence.

To increase in faith is to advance towards the accomplishment of the great purpose of our life. Upon this depend eternal issues. In this pursuit are bound up all our hopes of happiness; therefore the increase of our faith is the most precious thing in the esteem of our Lord. In His dealings with us it is His aim to keep this in our remembrance. We are slow to learn—we are prone to forget the aim of our creation—apt to lose sight of our true pursuits, and to identify ourselves with earth until we become earthly altogether. We live by *sight*, not by *faith*; therefore it is in compassion that God lays His hand upon us; His chastisements are marks of love; the sorrows He sends us are blessings; His judgments are mercies; He deals with us as with sons. We cling to earth until we are in danger of forgetting heaven, and it is necessary to our eternal safety that we should learn how vain and unsatisfying are earthly things. If we will not learn it otherwise, we must learn it through disappointment, loss, sorrow. Many a man has been first awakened to the uncertainty of earthly things by the overthrow of some cherished hope or ambition; many a man has got his first glimpse of heaven through the grave of some loved one. And if we have strayed or are in danger of straying from the path of holiness, is anything too hard, if only we may be brought back again? No, let us weep, for we cannot help it when losses come upon us; but if they awaken us to our need of God, if they bring us to a truer and more abiding consciousness of eternity, if they bring us into nearer communion with Christ, then we have cause to rejoice even in our pain, and our rejoicing will be eternal. Christ taught his disciples through the sorrow of Mary and Martha. He speaks to us in the afflictions of others. They are admonitions to us—they call us to a recognition of our own frailty and His omnipotence. We know not what a day or an hour may bring forth—we know not what sorrows lie before us; let us heed the voice of God—remember that this is not our rest, and seek by greater earnestness in our religious life, to do and to bear whatever may be God's will towards us.

Life is the time of probation and discipline; here we are at school—our true life is hereafter. God would draw our thoughts towards that higher and better life. He would have us live in a consciousness of eternal realities. Anything that renders us more susceptible of the influences of the Holy Spirit—anything that impels us towards Christ, that stirs us up to a truer and more practical recognition of our obligations and destiny, is a blessing. Any pain, any sorrow is worth enduring that shall arouse us from indifference

or wordliness, that shall bring us into a state of humble and devout trust in God our Father.

Finally, we learn from the text that God does not willingly afflict, and that when trouble has accomplished its purpose relief comes. Jesus said, "Nevertheless let us go unto him." Jesus had seen all the conflict and sorrow in that home. His heart had been there, and now as soon as he could, consistently with the fulfillment of his high purpose, he went to them to bring comfort and relief. So it is still; our Saviour knows just how far it is necessary for us to be tried, and beyond that he will not try us. He is watching in tender love and compassion when his children suffer, and he is at hand to bind up their wounds, to still the storm of grief, and to pour consolation into the stricken hearts. He may not take away the cause of sorrow as in the case before us, but the succor he brings is none the less perfect. It only needs that we call upon him. "Come unto me and I will give you rest," is the only source of relief. We may offer our sympathy to those who mourn—we may weep with those who weep, but how powerless are we to lessen the load of grief. How helpless we are in the presence of sorrow; we can do nothing, but Christ can do all. There is no sorrow that he cannot heal; his help is practical and efficient; "cast thy burden upon the Lord and He will sustain thee." He will speak words of comfort; He will impart strength; He will point the crushed and despairing soul to the better land where the loved and lost are waiting until those who are left behind for a season shall meet them again; the home of the soul where there is no more death; "where the inhabitants never say they are sick; where God shall wipe away all tears from off all faces." Christ can work for us a far more blessed deliverance than the removal of the present trouble. "This light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The troubles of life are light compared with the blessedness that God has prepared for them that love him. If the wounded heart turns to Christ as its stay and refuge, and clings to him with intenser love and firmer faith, then will it prove the blessedness of adversity. "It shall dwell on high; it shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. God calls us to a higher life, a truer existence, a closer communion with Himself. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard what God hath prepared for them that love Him." He would lift our souls to a higher plane, where they shall breathe a purer atmosphere, where in the sun-light of His countenance they shall become strong and

pure. This is possible for us ; it is possible to live so near to God that nothing shall have power to disturb our peace, but amidst all the waves of this troublesome world we shall be unmoved. And this is what we have to do ; this is all that is worth living for. To know God, to fear Him, to serve Him, to dwell with Him ; here is the great end and aim of life. Then brethren recall the dealings of God with your souls, meditate upon his judgments with humble thoughtfulness, and with repentance for unfaithfulness, with fervent prayer for enlightenment and guidance in the way of truth. And may He who alone sees the end from the beginning, and who doeth all things well, give us wisdom and grace to acknowledge His hand in all things, and inspire us to that * * * * *

[Here the M.S. ends. The conclusion was evidently intended to be extempore.]